

Welcome to OCHO #2, July 2006.



Contributors 8#2



Michael Parker
Grace Cavalieri
John Korn
Bob Marcacci
David Need
Tom Blessing
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Scott Glassman
Karl Parker
Barbra Nightingale
Birdie Jaworski
Julie Carter

Art on front and back cover by Jeff Filipski

On the Effects of Wind and Rivers

Michael Parker

Summer's desert wind has dried the fields of wild grass the color of an ill sun. It moves in the wind like submerged grasses move to the invariable currents of a river. Life has the peculiar power to curl us in its mercurial course. Refuse us departure from its firm grasp, like a barnacle might. Under a sudden loss of self, we forget we can captain atop this steady tide. Believe we are not the defeated souls laying defenseless to the blasting of the sweltering wind or like the fair Ophelia drowning in a tributary.

fill her up buttercup

john korn

I've been reading the newspaper all day nothing but red roses curling up through grainy photographs of the lonely dead my coffee smooth this gold window and you in your many seats, in your smiles with your head and all those wonderful trails of existence swimming through it like long thin scarves twirling budding green cool clearing of heart you are a home a miracle the rich and layered souls of the withered men, wood women, forever gathering they pass outside your living room they circle their purpose they want you to put on your sweatshirt with the tiny threads wearing off the sleeves they want you to breathe burgundy and fill your ribs uncanny with a bouquet of 2nd hand kaleidoscope colors it'll be easy, they say look at her! she's been a raw barren basket let our shedding history fall like pedal snow and ginger in to this.



Watching from A Distance

Grace Cavalieri

Where the day was a daughter,
Each carried like a leaf, every
One carved and touched into shape.
What is done is done,
And what do you suppose those steadfast
Soldiers — books — lined up on the shelf
Are all about? They speak of
Whatever loss is drying in the sun,
And Queen Anne's Lace,
In a talcum jar, in the child's bedroom,
Nothing more,
The fullness of the blessing once it leaves,
The fulfillment of those gone
To their own lives.
What of people whispering
Into the ears of horses,
What do you think they are saying? They
Warn of the forest, as they walk slowly
Beside the locust trees,
So many spikes you can find your way in the dark.

for Bai Wei

Bob Marcacci

move toward movement
toward ocean of oceans
move meant sink
float bottomless downward
move down down
among anemone and ocean nuance

move blue of bluer dark blue
black and blacker
move until shadows of shadows
moon new on the new atmosphere

move flower of flowers
in strange surfaceless surface
flowerless movement void
devoid of that suck and that
satisfaction

For the World of Dark Rains

I

The characters looked over the audience at something new, a day or world; or a door slammed. It was dawn and departure fell over each face

the way death does, as the face becomes its mask against no ground. Horizons recede like curtains

and though among the steadier mountains an almost constant surrounds us, there is no place

we are ranged against the falling light of sunset as it deepens.

II

Is it just at death that we are reconciled to the nomadic hours? Doesn't heart circulate its pastures by footfalls that alterate

across the exposed and weathered? The music of rock and tuft grass has never suggested we could still breath

and depart. You, already abandoned, lattice work that has somehow caught a poem.

Or, more precisely, become a small shelter in the otherwise constant open.

III

It's possible that, after a long time, what seemed like a stern loss in the omen sky, was part of a different chord that

only now arrived as this fence and that window and the space between, lit by the reflections buried in the hardwood

floor. Skylights make a room but the stars are more like a soft soil sold in bags

and spread out over the brown spring grass—something easily forgotten, left by the garage,

IV

I know it does not always work out. I tried to remember that each one of us will be torn along the seam of the grounds we remain

loyal to. The world cracks my fingers and the sky bends over, but it is very big, almost big enough to fill

my back. Perhaps I will stay on the driveway an hour—spring is still distant, but the air is full of the newer sun again. Solace enough? I don't know what calls you to say.

V

It meant world in another language and that somehow made it realer because there was a doubling, the way curtains of rain cross

the street. I was always wanting to say twice, I am twice, and in someone else's dream, holding a broken crystal and was

crying; it was the way the stars and grass are sisters, something we know from the autumn

nights, when once again joy is crystallizing, and tears are fruits

or the ear becomes a room.

David Need

VI

Sometimes you are told "You must go back to the beginning" and it seems this might be possible; but you are always

wondering, "Is there time? Is there enough time left?" It would be nice if we were sewn whole so that it was just

a matter of returning to the place on the sidewalk where it might have been lost,

where you were walking to school and ended up on a different street, walking past

blank houses.

VII

A long time ago I missed my chance to survive the apocalypse even though I'd heard

Neil Young's "Sugar Mountain" and one of the departing had chosen me. Is there still a way

for you? I only know it might involve long hours in laundromats

and bus rides, losing children and friends, and stubbornly watching

the sky.



For the World of Dark Rains

David Need

VIII

Between devotion and laurels lies the low swing,
that happy marriage of birches that so often
is simply a space left in the yard
among other forgotten, domesticated words

the sun justifies in shadows.
I remain somehow dumbly wedded to this
and keep saying it long after the guests have gone
in a clamor. I am not the only one developing

here, in this afternoon. Maybe you'd rather talk
of erections or how much semen the gate
manager is willing to release;

I'm wishing the air would part and part again.
That's the way fields
Come into being.

IX

The stylites were again climbing their poles in lieu of the absent mountains
but it was worth trying, or one could sympathize; dreams have velocity &
many of us—the boys at least—spent hours throwing a ball at a chimney
wearing a brown patch into the robin's lawn.

The bookshelves sag with the weight of warning and good advice, but
it's that each of us must find the limit ourselves, whether its Gloucester
sidewalks or Paris and her tombstones, or a dwindling that begins to gather,
a lessening of the struggle that seeps in from June and the clouds again.

No one wants to hear these lessons from another's lips; surely the sky is full
of a better food, or a field at least that could be plowed
at least give me one desire you say, make me love, tell me the truth

If an image cannot become rain it is hard to breath it, and then what's between us?
You miles back pulling the cart a little ways further
and me wondering if the passing clouds will uncover my heart.

Tom Blessing

late sunday evening

we study
the ways the wind
ripples
the surface
of the lake

it is twilight
the fish
aren't biting

we stand
each alone
with the
spirit of a third

johnny took
the final bait
last night
out on 41
he put his
F-10 into
the big old
pine
at koski's
corner

we stand
quietly
as a smallmouth
breaks the surface

Mistake

Julie Carter

It took three years, but now they thunk a stone
deep into dirt near where your head would lie
if you had fallen, sprawled, upon the mown
green of your grave. So many seasons I
mistook some other grassy lumps of bone
for you and stood awaiting some reply.

8#2

OCHO

a collective longing

kari edwards

I'm not always this way when completely falling down the case case,
landing on an alias floor, laughing, thinking, this is my confessional
pain, segmented out in short aimless bits, thinking, this is a figure
of speech to summarize a general way of being, a concept going on and
on about itself, brought on by random paranoia, brought on by thinking
it is perfectly justified, watching this and that, that will always
lead to that which is an it that . . . or when some idiot jumps out
and says boooo . . . and my mind not being on some enlightenment plan,
jumps right back to a figure of speech for some quality I'm not sure
how to put into words . . . but this is not about some insurance plan,
it is about a desire in a half assembled utopia, close enough to
righteousness to be dogma, exclusive enough to be good marketing,
where every one is chanting some kind of sacred subtitled something,
thinking this is a different knife of punctuation, being drown down
and covered by the billowing exhaust, probing lips striding right in
on private conversations, going on and on about the mother this, or
their mother that, put your life in the mother's hand, give all your
money to the mother, take care of your mother when she gets old, have
you called your mother lately? Wondering can the mother make my
coffee this morning? Listening to the bus horn dogs, thinking this
must be the mother barking at the stars, or running out of milk and
feeling slightly bruised in a periodic state.

Peanut Butter

Julie Carter

It just hangs on my tongue, not tumbling
like tactless words, something uncaught.
He eyes me, resigned, when I wheedle a bite
hands over a spoon so I can say
how much I hate it, hate peanuts
and their butter. Hate the shells
like sandpaper, the husks that clamber
up into my gumline, the debris kicked up
by a salty ballpark breeze. I have to say
these things before I taste, before my mouth
is pasted like an envelope for the stamp.

OCHO

Scott Glassman

Icarus' First Experience in a Theater

His wings take up an entire row.
Someone mistakes the wax holding them together
for popcorn butter and laughs out loud,
ruining the scene where E.T. leaves.

The screen is the sea of a dream so immense,
the projector breaks, that little window
suddenly opaque, the sky too,
the absence of his father now an absence of story

understanding it, at that moment
as the tower that would remain
empty, the one that he fell from.

Icarus at Super Bowl XX

There were no crowds cheering that day
when the football skimmed the atmosphere
and dropped a yard short of the endzone.

No touchdown dance involving
a Sharpee or a lewd gesture.
The sea closes over everything.

In Brueghel's last painting,
there were no women carrying baskets of clothing
waving from the shore, or lyre players

asleep in the grass, dreaming of victory—
but sea gulls, hundreds of them,
maybe more, returning to the sky

as though it were pure again
and his father, hovering, suspended there
searching for his son

among the empty orange seats,
echoless swells going by in the dark
like tangerines falling into the lap of the earth.

O
C
H
O

YOU NAME IT

Somebody built a fortress right in the middle of our city.
That made it hard to tear down, everyone could see.

People were brought in and out, both burned and alive.
It was a battle place, a place where things went wrong

inside and out. In the heart of our city, a burning place
of all things, what more could we do?

Karl Parker

Karl Parker

SOME

What we do gets done to us,
is that what you're trying to say?
Another fold, any field, even
rain has got us here, somewhere
to find or fail to find a place
in the sense that means for each.

After all, we do do things to
things as well, there must be
more to it than that that gathers.
I must say I'm glad you've come
in and through whatever ways

and meaningly joins. We repeat
unevenly these gestures of
occasioning arrival as they
become awhile what we are
before something else occurs
to us to do, and that's that.



AS IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW

Day reddens for a reason.
Small, all-too-blue now
through thin-slat blinds
as traffic sounds outside.

A door and stairs from here
to there, not much more
to it than that. And yet
you hesitate; no, not yet.
Why leave quiet
when you can? For these

and similar occasions
of stark agreement
among our internals
and their surroundings,
remain calm. Soon you
move beyond the clock.

The Space Between

(Portraits in Flux)

Barbra Nightingale

One brother sees light
as a spatial plane,
counts the beats
between the spheres,
and talks about being
and nothing
as if the suffix "ness,"
like his sculptures
in acrylic and glass,
were his own creation.

The middle brother sees things-
period. He has Parkinson's
and a scoliotic spine.
His meds make him loopy
though he knows it
and smiles at the tricks
his mind can play:
Little men play golf
from trees on the 72nd floor.
Somehow he grows only richer,
keener, as though tuned to some
channel none of us can hear.

The youngest claims to be
a Brother of Little or No Mercy,
a converted church for a house.
He bends neon for Harleys;
motorcycles roar up his drive.
Dozens of workshops honeycomb
his basement, durm and strang
sifting like dust in the air.
At night he wanders the Great Hall,
the altar now a bar, the pews filled
with someone else's memory.

The eldest just showed up,
conjured out of locked records
and lost dreams to claim his rightful place.
Our mother is dazed, as though
she's living someone else's life,
as though I will shake her awake
and tell her she's dreaming,
as if truth didn't wean itself out
like shards of glass over time,
surface on the skin, a sharp prick,
the sting of blood.

As for me, I'm the one not given
to the gypsies for a reason, so they said,
the not maiden though now single sister
who looks after their mother now;
But there it is, something in the genes,
perhaps, the reason for daughters, after all,
I'm just the thread that ties us,
the space between the lines.

The End

There are many ways to tell a story.
you could start with "It happened like this."
Or you could start before it began,
as in "Long, long ago." You can even say
"Eons from now when all was forgotten,"
and it would still be the same story.
If things didn't happen
there'd be nothing to say
and the world would be silent
like the way snow falls in the night,
the river runs downstream,
how earth fills a grave.

Sonnet for What I'm Not

I'm not that girl in the flowered car,
bent with beads and anger.
I'm not the girl you married
almost against her will.
I'm not sorry I left the blue
of your eyes, Caribbean deep blue sea.
I am sorry I never came back,
never called, never wrote. Thirty-four years.
I'm sorry it mattered and I didn't know.
Sorry I didn't care. But then
I'd never be who I am now.
You'd never be where you are
sifting through ashes-a very cold fire.

A Box of Crackerjacks

Once upon a time long, long ago-
That's how it all begins, right?
Once and long ago?
But why is it only once
and why so very long ago?
Why aren't often and now
part of the language,
the mythology of love?

Why is it nothing is the same
and yet it is all there again?
Who is this girl, this boy
who rubbed together like sticks
so long ago ignited such a flame?
Who is this man, this woman now?

Here, take this box, reach inside
and claim the prize; redemption
is memory's child, and she's waiting.

The Hat

Birdie Jaworski

The afternoon of my mother's wake I bought a Stetson at a pawn shop. It hung next to a stringless guitar. It hung, covered in the invisible dust of money hungry pain. It hung on a tarnished brass hook. I paid five dollars to a man with an orange-striped shirt. I don't remember his face.

I placed the hat on the passenger seat of my car. A Stetson. Black. The oiled pitch of movie malevolence. The hat wore a woven leather band decorated with an engraved silver charm. Two sizes larger than my head. Grade thirty X, the Rolls Royce of fox fur sculpture.

Hey you, I said to the hat. My mom died.

The hat made sympathetic noises. The hat expressed displeasure at the change of schedule.

After the funeral I placed the hat on my bed's extra pillow, the space I saved for a lover. The hat took root. I felt it push tendrils through the green satin, through duck down, through layers of coiled springs and metal frame. I felt it push into the oak floorboards, into the crawl space, into the ground rich with uranium and feldspar. I fueled the germination with my fingers. I traced the spiral galaxy etched into silver. I brushed the hat with care, sprayed it with rain repellent. I loved the hat, loved the way it smelled like roadtrip ozone.

I told the hat stories at night, stories about my day, about my children. I told the hat it was much more than a five dollar whim. Sometimes the hat listened. Sometimes it didn't. The hat's roots pulled memory from the underworld, a place not-yet-separated from its prior owner. The hat kept one upturned side-brim touching my sheets, but the other side sunk into the pillowcase.

My wrists weren't strong enough to pull the hat from the bed. One day I went in search of a shovel to transplant it to a more suitable environment, but I got sidetracked by my father/kids/dog/work.

We're dying, they said. Leave that damn hat alone and attend to us.

I did. The hat understood. The hat was not happy. I asked the hat for help but it sat still. I asked the hat to rub my back, to cook me dinner, to tell me funny jokes. The hat would not budge.

After a while I slept with my back to the hat. I wore old sweats to bed instead of frilly lingerie. I wanted the hat to notice that I was lonely. The hat did not. It remembered the pawn shop. It remembered its old life. It remembered the five dollars. It pointed a brim finger at me. It told me I made the roots stronger.

I grabbed a shotgun and shot in the air above the hat.

Get out of my bed you mean old lazy crummy hat! I yelled. I didn't mean it. I wanted the hat to protest. The hat fell to the floor. It sat there for two days.

I packed the hat in a box yesterday. I wrapped it in plastic. I stuck stamps on the side of the box. I stuffed an old beadsprad in the hole left by the roots. I slept alone.

Karl Parker

LIFE STORY

Once, in a dream, you played
yourself, and were pretty

good at it. All was, after
all, said and done—when

the sense of ending, some
stairwell or other, sound

of rain in fall shall
we say, became the dream;

back and forth and to and from
again, day actively divided

by later days. Shadowplay:
we are at war for *now*.



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